



INCLUSION POLICY

Revised December 2022

Reviewed Annually in August

Inclusion is an ongoing process that aims to increase access and engagement in learning for all students by identifying and removing barriers.

“Special Educational Needs within the IB Programmes” 2016

Equity policy

(adopted from The School District of Palm Beach County’s document “Equity Policy,” 2018)

At Forest Hill Community High School and Conniston Middle School, we have a strong belief that all students should have access to rigorous courses. We allow the opportunity for any student who wishes to participate in MYP, DP, and/or CP to participate. We do not discourage any student from selecting an IB course nor do we prohibit any student from entering DP or CP. In fact, it is our goal to have every student on our campus enrolled in an accelerated course.

Purpose

The School Board of Palm Beach County is committed to eliminating race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or socioeconomic status as predictors for academic outcomes. For the purposes of this policy, “equity” is defined both as an outcome and as an action. Equity as an outcome would be the state that would be achieved if a student's success and well-being was no longer predictable by any social, cultural or economic factor. Equity as an action in schools involves individuals who are willing to:

- interrupt and dismantle harmful or inequitable practices and policies, eliminate implicit and explicit biases, and create truly inclusive, culturally responsive school environments for adults and children;
 - Ensure that each child receives what they need when they need it, to develop to their full academic and social potential.
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- Cultivate the unique gifts, talents and interests that reside in every child.

The School Board believes that opportunity and access to our classrooms, programs, services, and resources is critical to the achievement of successful student outcomes. The District will adopt policies and procedures that promote diverse and equitable access for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, language, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious and spiritual beliefs, or physical and learning abilities.

This policy addresses existing practices and procedures that have inhibited success for some students. These barriers have translated into low academic achievement for the certain groups of students, including but not limited to: African American, Haitian, of other African descent, Hispanic, Latino, Guatemalan Mayan, English Language Learners, economically disadvantaged, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ), and students with disabilities. This is neither a coincidental occurrence or an accurate reflection of how these students are capable of performing.

Eliminating inequitable practices in our District will help increase academic achievement, graduation rates, and post-graduate success for all students. The District will continue to ensure that all students are provided with an adequate education and the support needed to succeed.

Desired outcomes

The School Board will implement policies that promote equity and access for all students by taking the following steps:

1. The District will identify and address systemic deficiencies that create gaps in academic achievement.
2. The District will provide leadership that is committed to identifying and working to bring resolutions to disparities and disproportionalities in practices that inhibit the success of students.
3. The District will be committed to allocating financial resources to address the needs of students who require additional interventions to achieve academic success.
4. The District will select and develop instructional materials that are historically accurate and represent the experiences of a diverse school community.

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5. The District will select and develop instructional materials that include the following:
 - a. The study of African Americans and the contributions of African diasporic people to society. This includes but is not limited to the study of Africans in Antiquity, The History of Haiti, and Western Hemispheric History that has been influenced by Africans.
 - b. The study of Hispanic/Latino contributions to the United States and the World.
 - c. The study of Indigenous people's contributions to the United States and the world.
 - d. The study of women's contributions to the United States and the World.
 - e. Instruction to expand the knowledge, understanding, and awareness of LGBTQ studies and the LGBTQ social movements.
 - f. Instruction to expand the knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, the history of disability, and the disability rights movement.
 6. The District will ensure that each student will have access to multiple pathways to success and advanced academic programs. Students shall not be prohibited access to gifted programs or accelerated courses on the basis of race, gender, socioeconomic status, native language, sexual orientation, gender identification, country of birth, or disability.
 7. The District will utilize data and evidence-based research to address racial disproportionality in student discipline and placement in special education programs.
 8. The District will utilize data and evidence-based research to address disproportionality in student placement among the disability eligibilities.
 9. The District will recruit and make efforts to retain highly-qualified administrators and teachers that reflect the racially and linguistically diverse community of Palm Beach County.

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10. The District will provide evidence-based professional learning with a focus on understanding and teaching a diverse population. Administrators and Teachers are encouraged to collaborate to develop and implement culturally responsive instructional practices that are effective for students of all backgrounds and abilities.
 11. The District will encourage effective partnerships with families, students, and communities to examine issues related to inequity in our schools. These stakeholders will serve as essential partners in planning and decision-making for their student's education and offer diverse perspectives in developing strategies to confront inequities and institutional racism.
 12. The District will provide ongoing and open communication to keep all stakeholders informed of the District's strategic plan and progress with embedding equity and cultural competence in educational practices.
 13. The District will utilize formal and informal evaluative tools to assess equitable instructional practices and programs.

Students with special needs

In accordance with IB expectations, the Department of Education (DOES), The School District of Palm Beach County, as well as the guidelines and beliefs shared by all teaching staff, Forest Hill Community High School and Conniston Middle School strive to support students with special educational needs.

In accordance with school district policy, available on the school district website (<https://www.palmbeachschools.org/domain/402>), we are committed to providing exceptional students a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in accordance with federal, state, and local mandates. In keeping with this philosophy, the School District including both Forest Hill and Conniston:

- provides every exceptional student with an appropriate individualized education program (IEP),
- offers exceptional students services that are available to every other student,

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- provides placement alternatives that enable students to be educated in the least restrictive environment,
 - encourages the participation of parents in the educational process, and
 - ensures the right to due process and equal protection under the law.

Exceptional student education (ESE) programs

In Florida, there are several programs that exceptional students may be eligible for.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Defined to be a range of pervasive developmental disorders that adversely affects a student's functioning and results in the need for specially designed instruction and related services.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)

Defined as a student who has a hearing loss aided or unaided, that impacts the processing of linguistic information and which adversely affects performance in the educational environment.

Developmentally Delayed (DD)

Defined as a prekindergarten child with disabilities is a child who is below five (5) years of age on or before September 1 and has a sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition which significantly affects the attainment of normal developmental milestones.

Dual -Sensory Impairment (DSI)

Defined as impairments affecting both vision and hearing, the combination of which causes a serious impairment in the abilities to acquire information, communicate, or function within the environment, or who has a degenerative condition which will lead to such an impairment.

Emotional/Behavioral Disability (EBD)

Defined as a student with persistent (*is not sufficiently responsive to implemented evidence based interventions*) and consistent emotional or behavioral responses that adversely affect performance in the educational environment that cannot be attributed to age, culture, gender, or ethnicity.

Intellectual Disabilities (IND)

Defined as significantly below average general intellectual and adaptive functioning manifested during the developmental period, with significant delays in academic skills. Developmental period refers to birth to eighteen (18) years of age.

Language Impairment (LI)

Defined as disorders of language that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the student's typical learning environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education.

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

Defined as a severe skeletal, muscular, or neuromuscular impairment. The term includes impairments resulting from congenital anomalies (*e.g. including but not limited to skeletal deformity or spina bifida*), and impairments resulting from other causes (*e.g., including but not limited to cerebral palsy or amputations*).

Other Health Impairment (OHI)

Defined as having limited strength, vitality or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems. This includes, but is not limited to, asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, Tourette syndrome, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and acquired brain injury.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in significant difficulties affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematics.

Speech Impairment (SI)

Defined as disorders of speech sounds, fluency, or voice that interfere with communication, adversely affect performance and/or functioning in the educational environment, and result in the need for exceptional student education.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Defined as an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects educational performance. The term does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth traumas.

Meeting the needs of our students

As per federal, state, and district mandates the school provides support for each student as outlined by their Individual Education Plan (IEP). These supports and accommodations are reviewed and updated annually through yearly IEP meetings. Input is received from parents, teachers, and students while in attendance or through input documentation received by the ESE Coordinator prior to the meeting.

Teachers are not limited to the accommodations outlined on a students' IEP. At their discretion, they may add additional support as determined through observations, formative assessments, and/or summative assessments.

Inclusion committee

Forest Hill Community High School

Shannon Deere, DP/CP Coordinator
Justin Boruch, MYP Coordinator
Alexa Kokotoff, IB Guidance Counselor
Janette Lopez, ESE Coordinator
Camella Slydell, IB Assistant Principal

Conniston Middle School

Eric Fasone, MYP Coordinator
James Thomas, Head of School
Josh Widerman, Literacy Coach
Javier Ortolaza, IB Assistant Principal